1: Ammar E. 1-5 (1951) 1954
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one a piece of land, and to the less favoured a large piece of gold. As the first son complained about his inheritance, his dying father told him that every grain of earth he had left for him was mixed with a grain of gold, and that if he dug well enough he would be able to extract the gold from it. After a lapse of some time the less favoured one squandered his gold, while the other, by 'digging' harder and harder, added to the fertility of his land and thus prospered and was worthy of his father's love. For this reason, the latter was taken as an ideal symbol of filial piety.

As mentioned previously, to have origin in the village is also to have land, and this is reflected in the scheme of the village land. The cultivable land was divided between the descendants of 'On and Musa, the two brothers, who were the heads of the village sections.[1] It is maintained that every ten kasabas (land-measure) of land owned by 'On clansmen is followed by another ten kasabas owned by Musa clansmen. 'If you have no sahm or kirat (land-measure) handed over to you from your ancestors, then you are not a full member of your clan,' Ali stated, 'and two families had to migrate from the village to another village because they had to sell their land. It is the worst lot that can befall any person. It brings disgrace to him to abandon his father's trust, and it also means that he is sinning against his children. There are few people still in the village who have sold their land, and they are like those who have shed their clothes and remained stark naked; both are the two great shame-bringing practices.'

Yet those who are under considerable economic pressure resort to the device of 'land-pawn' which entails the owner's handing over of his land to a man in return for a comparatively large sum of money. The latter tills the land as if it was his possession, to be returned to its original owner on his payment of the debt. Another way of relieving economic distress without actually selling the land is the so-called 'conditional sale', whereupon the owner sells with option to repurchase at a given date.

If selling land is one of the worst social practices, the acquisition of land is naturally the best one. To be able to add to one's inheritance is a sign of parents' approval and content with their son's deeds as well as God's blessing. It is interesting to find children about the age of five or six singing a rhyme, telling how a chicken given to a child by his mother has enabled him in the long run to acquire a 'kirat'—one twenty-fourth of a feddan. The rhyme goes on to say, 'My mother gave me a chicken, the chicken bought me a goose, the goose bought me a small goat, the goat bought me a sheep, the sheep bought me a small donkey, the donkey bought me a cow and the cow bought me a kirat'. There is another version of the same song, differing in what the cow bought for the child, and in the other version he got a 'bride' and the bride got him a 'bridegroom—a son'.[2]

From the point of view of land tenure, the village is a typical example of

[1] See Chapter II for social structure.
[2] The rhyme is occasionally associated with bouncing the ball on the wall.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
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to and decided by a Government superior to local sanctions, the esteem of local institutions has been undermined and the traditional structure of authority has lost some of its grip.

If the villagers have increasingly resorted to Government procedures in their disputes, they still consider both Government and Government officials as agencies of imposition and control, and hence to be feared. The identification of any Effendi wearing European suit and fez with a policeman is indicative of the role of the Government in the people's mind. The first strong impact of centralized Government was probably during the reign of Mohammed Ali, when its pressures were felt through conscription, the rigid collection of taxes, and the registration of land. For a long time in Egypt this apprehension held towards the Government was connected with education, since education and conscription were associated during the days of Mohammed Ali, when hitherto war had been the business of a certain caste and farmers were not concerned with it. The fear of Government authorities is reflected in the story of the old man in the village who had been very annoyed and did not speak to his son for a long time because the latter was entangled in a dispute for which the father had to be called to the police station to give evidence. The father considered his going to the police station as a humiliation brought to him by his son.

It is also considered as a betrayal to report cases of infectious diseases to the authorities, as this would cause trouble to the family by involving the father and the mother in governmental queries and procedures. To keep away from governmental institutions was always the safest policy. An example of this is the failure of the branch of the Agricultural Credit Bank established in 1938 to help the farmers to have their crops secured, to borrow money accordingly, and thus to rescue them from falling a prey to usury. The bank has been in fact mainly used by outside crop merchants to buy crops from the village and store them until prices improved. It only functioned to its full capacity during the last war when governmental legislation compelled every farmer to sell part of his crop to the Government according to the land he cultivated. The villagers have never taken to the benefits of the bank, partly because it involved becoming implicated with Government procedures, and partly because it implied loss of prestige, due to dealing with interest, which is religiously forbidden. For the same reason, life insurance is never entertained by the villagers, nor by a great section of the Egyptian society as a whole, partly because it involves interest, as well as because it presents a challenge to man's destiny. In 1950 the branch of the bank in the village had to be closed down. Yet this does not mean that usury is not practised amongst the villagers in Silwa in spite of being condemned by the Koran, although it is not widespread and is avoided as much as possible.[1]

[1] M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, in talking about the Koranic prohibition of 'riba' (increase, interest) in Moslem society remarks that 'it was in that very society . . . that

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
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116.

Christian and Moslem.

A Mohammedan woman has thrown herself away on a Coptic goldsmith. The word nuṣrāni, Christian, always has an odious sound to the Moslem; for this reason the woman thinks she has claim to valuable gifts from her lover. [539x 558] [186]

Ramāni-l-ɣarām, ramāni
taḥtê šibbāk en-nuṣrāni.
Ma ʾultê-lak, ya-mʿallim Mūse?
Duʾ lil-kirdān ʿarūse!
Muslime we-ʿāšiʾet nuṣrāni!

Love has smitten me, smitten me
Under the Christian's window.
Did I not tell thee, Master Mūsa?
"Fasten a pendant to my necklace!"
I, a Moslem, in love with a Christian!

3. Have I not had to ask you once before for the ornament? Meʿallim, master, literally: teacher, is a title given to all Copts, with the exception of the poorest classes. [554]

4. ʿarūse is an ornament, which hangs zē nišān = like an order, on the necklace. [301]

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

535 the inevitable castanets (like the crotali of the ancients),
527 and casts around coquettish glances. Whatever of art is
[534] displayed consists in movements of the trunk and hips—impossible to imitate—the limbs being almost at rest. Occasionally the girl moves slowly round in a circle, gives a slight hop, perhaps swings a sword, and sinks gradually to the ground balancing a small cup on her forehead, or whirls herself round sitting on a narrow-mouthed pitcher. Yet the public are enthusiastic to the highest degree about those female performers, a popularity which no doubt they owe more to their affability than to their artistic skill, since they joke with everybody and everybody with them without any embarrassment. But dancing is given up entirely to them, and if any one were to catch them round the waist, *ala Franka*, and dance round in a galop with them, he would bring abuse and disgrace on himself, and would be set down as crazy. It is a modern and Frankish custom for members of both sexes to dance together in close contact, and such a practice was also unknown to classical antiquity. The Oriental loves dancing and music, but seldom cultivates them in person, getting people who practise these arts as their profession to perform for his entertainment; and their profession is never held in esteem, but is regarded as degrading, like that of an actor in the Frankish middle ages. For
533 a grown-up man of the better class to sing by himself, or
[558] merely to join in with others, or even to amuse himself on a musical instrument, is regarded as undignified, and still more for ladies. At such *fantasies* the representatives of religion,
527 the kadis and ulema, do not fail to be present, and laugh
793 heartily even at obscenities. The priests of ancient Egypt, as also the severe Socrates, saw no harm in having music and dancing in their houses; they even practised music themselves. The higher ranks did not dance and sing themselves,
[171] but hired professional dancing-girls and musical performers as at the present day. Among the Greeks music and dancing were in high esteem, and formed a part of education—even the gods themselves danced.

535 The performance of the *chauel* or male dancer is not much
527